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ABSTRACT

This theme issue focuses on issues related to high Texas dropout rates among Hispanic and other minority group students and on dropout prevention strategies. "School Finance Inequities Mean Schools Are Not Ready To Teach" (Maria Robledo Montecel) deplores the recent Texas Supreme Court ruling that state educational funding is constitutional, outlines state and national needs for improved school facilities, discusses the relationship of adequate facilities to educational quality, and calls for direct state funding for school buildings. "Equity and Accountability Needed To Reduce Dropout Rates" (Josie Danini Supik) points out that over half of Texas Hispanic students drop out, discusses successful dropout prevention strategies based on valuing all children, and calls for equitable schools that tap minority children's strengths. "Up or Down: The Dropout Dilemma in Texas" (Roy Johnson) challenges Texas Education Agency claims that state dropout rates declined, 1988-95; presents findings based on enrollment data that high school attrition rates during the period increased 27 percent overall, 50 percent for Blacks, and 18 percent for Hispanics; and provides 1995-96 attrition rates by county and race. "What Adults Should Know about Teenagers" provides a bilingual Hispanic teenager's perspective on support needs of students, dropping out, and bilingualism. "Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Expands" provides an update on the successful dropout prevention program in which at-risk secondary students tutor elementary students. "Our Nation on the Fault Line: Hispanic American Education Dropouts" (excerpt from the report of the President's Advisory Committee on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans) concludes that serious shortcomings in the public education system lead directly to unacceptable dropout rates, exceedingly low numbers of college graduates, and an overall denial of educational excellence to Hispanic Americans. Unrelated to the theme, "'E Pluribus Unum' Strengthened by Multicultural Education" (Frank Gonzales) outlines school reforms that support valuing of ethnic and cultural pluralism. (SV)

INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

IDRA Newsletter

IDRA Focus:
Staying in School

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IDRA Newsletter

ISSN 1068-3674 Volume XXIII, No. 9 October 1996

IDRA Focus:
Staying in School

School Finance Inequities Mean Schools Are Not Ready to Teach

Maria Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: In September, IDRA presented testimony before the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans during hearings held by the commission in connection with the National Summit on Latino Children: La Promesa de un Futuro Brillante hosted by the National Latino Children's Agenda. The following is an overview of the testimony on school finance.

I am here before you, commissioners, because of an issue that has not received necessary attention: funding for school facilities.

In January of 1995, to the dismay of poor school districts in Texas and of education advocacy groups, the Texas Supreme Court handed down a decision that all but ended 25 years of a long-standing fight to achieve funding equity in Texas. The court upheld Senate Bill 7 as constitutional under the Texas Constitution and in effect declared that the state's funding system is equal enough.

"Children First" Declaration

In response, IDRA released a declaration, "Children First," along with the support of more than 70 individuals and organizations. The declaration outlines our commitment to the creation of a truly equitable funding system. We believe that the Texas Supreme Court erred in limiting state responsibility to the provision of an equalized inferior education for all students.

IDRA, along with the supporting organizations and individuals (see Page 14), stated the following:

- As the district court noted, *all* children are the state's children and thus should have equitable access to educational opportunities.
- The demands of the workplace and the skills needed to be full and productive citizens require access to more than a minimum education.
- Justice is not served when the court endorses the concept of superior education for some citizens while relegating others to a so-called "equalized" inferior one, even when the commissioner of education testifies, "Our present accreditation criteria at the acceptable level ... does not match up with what the real world requirements are."
- The legislature has a moral and legal obligation to equitably fund school facilities because: (1) local districts are required to provide grounds, buildings, furniture and equipment, (2) districts are currently required to bear this burden totally on their own, and (3) the ability to shoulder the load is entirely dependent upon unequal district property tax bases.

When we put children first on the list of policy priorities and when we give them the best that we have to offer, the return will be so much greater.

School Finance

Texas is one of 28 states where the school funding system was subjected to a legal challenge. It is one of 13 states (Alabama, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, West Virginia and Wyoming) where the courts actually found the system

School Finance Inequities - continued on page 13

IDRA is an independent nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to improving educational opportunity. Through research, materials development, training, technical assistance, evaluation, and information dissemination, we're helping to create schools that work for all children.

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http://www.academicinnovations.com/index.html

Ask ERIC
http://www.ericir.syr.edu

Association of Youth Councils
http://www.ayc.org

Children's Literature Web Guide
http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/index.html

Classroom Connect
http://www.classroom.net/classroom/default.html

C-Span in the Classroom
http://www.c-span.org/cinc.html

FedWorld
http://www.fedworld.gov

For Young Writers
http://www.interlog.com/~ohi/inkspot/young.html

Intercultural Development Research Association
http://www.txdirect.net/users/idra

MacTutor History of Mathematics
http://www-groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk:80/~history

Mega Mathematics by the Los Alamos National Laboratory
http://www.c3.lanl.gov/mega-math

NASA
http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/hqpao/hqpao_home.html

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE)
http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu

Smithsonian Natural History
http://nmnhwww.si.edu/nmnhweb.html

STAR Center
http://www.starcenter.org

Texas Education Agency
http://www.tea.state.tx.us

Texas Education Network (TENET)
http://www.tenet.edu

U.S. Department of Education
http://www.ed.gov

White House
http://www.whitehouse.gov

Testimony Before the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans

Equity and Accountability Needed to Reduce Dropout Rates

Josie Danini Supik, M.A.

Editor's Note: In September, IDRA presented testimony before the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans during hearings held by the commission in conjunction with the National Summit on Latino Children, La Promesa de un Future Brillante, *hosted by the National Latino Children's Agenda. Below is the text of the testimony on dropouts.*

We are here this afternoon to speak for those who have no voice – our children and youth. We as adults, as Hispanics, have a responsibility to ensure that all of our children have equitable opportunities for success. If we fail, this country will have lost all that our children could have and would have been. And right now, commissioners, as your report clearly delineates (see Page 12), we are failing our children.

In this country, one out of 10 Hispanic students drops out of school every year. In Texas, our studies show that one out of every two Hispanic students drops out of school. When you look at the trend over time, this number has increased over the past 10 years: from 45 percent of Hispanic students dropping out of school in 1986 to 53 percent in 1996. Furthermore, of all students who drop out of school, half are Hispanic. Of all Hispanics who drop out, half do so before entering the ninth grade.

In 1986, IDRA conducted the first statewide study of dropouts in the state of Texas. We looked at the magnitude; the identification, counting and reporting of dropouts; the cost to our country; and what we were doing about it. Our research resulted in the state legislature passing House Bill 1010 in 1987 that required standard identification and reporting procedures of students who drop out of school. In 1986, we found that for every $1 invested in education there was a $9 return.

Much has been written about the reasons that our children and youth drop out of school. Much of it has been deficit based, blaming our children or their families for our failures. In 1989, IDRA conducted research on the dropout issue for the Dallas Independent School District. This was a landmark study because our research questions did not ask what is wrong with our Hispanic children and their families. We asked why our schools are losing them.

Among our findings was that what made a profound difference in whether or not Hispanic students stayed in school was the presence of an adult who cared – someone in the school, a teacher, a principal, a counselor, someone who saw the inherent value of students, someone who cared and advocated for them – someone who believed, as IDRA does, that *all students are valuable; none is expendable.* Our program, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, is one manifestation of adults connecting with youths considered potential dropouts in a way that is a testament to students' strengths and what they can contribute to their peers, their schools, their families and their communities (see Page 11).

We must not underestimate the effects of such a connection or such a belief and valuing model: more that 98 percent of Valued Youth participants, most of them Hispanic, stay in school. During the first four years of the program in the South San Antonio Independent School District, all of the Valued Youth students, almost all of

Equity and Accountability – continued on page 7

Did You Know?

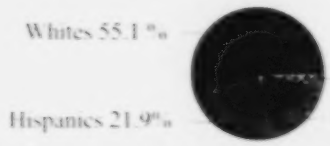
Nationally, the event dropout rate for 10th through 12th grades (15 to 24 years old) was 5.3 percent. A total of about 497,000 students dropped out of the nation's public schools. Across race-ethnicity groups, the event dropout rate was: Whites, 4.2 percent; Hispanics, 10 percent; and Blacks, 6.6 percent.

– National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report of October 1994 rates

Nationally, Hispanics were 2.4 times as likely and Blacks were 1.6 times as likely to drop out of school than were Whites.

– National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report of October 1994 rates

Percent of All Dropouts in the United States



– National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report of October 1994 rates

Texas ranked 47th in 1994 with a graduation rate of 59.6 percent.

– National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report of October 1994 rates

The dropout situation is costing Texas more than $17 billion in lost income and tax revenues, welfare, crime, incarceration, unemployment and job training (for each cohort of dropouts).

– IDRA's 1986 study, Texas School Dropout Survey Project

For every $1 spent on prevention, there is a return of $9.

– IDRA's 1986 study, Texas School Dropout Survey Project

Up or Down: The Dropout Dilemma in Texas

Ray Johnson, M.S.

Are school dropout rates declining or increasing in Texas? That is the question.

Some people say that dropout rates (and consequently the number of students dropping out of school) have declined dramatically over the past eight years. Relying on self-reported data from school districts across the state, the Texas Education Agency reports that the number and percent of dropouts have declined steadily between 1987-88 and 1994-95:

- The reported number of dropouts declined from 91,307 in 1987-88 to 29,918 in 1994-95.
- The annual dropout rate declined from a rate of 6.7 percent in 1987-88 to a rate of 1.8 percent in 1994-95 (TEA, 1996).

Recent analyses by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) of the number of students lost from public school enrollment prior to graduation show, however, a drastically different picture on the status of public school dropouts. Despite the many dropout initiatives and the success of some efforts, IDRA's analyses of statewide and county enrollment data show that the percent of students lost from enrollment has been increasing during these last few years.

In 1986, IDRA conducted the first comprehensive study of school dropouts in Texas (Cárdenas, et al, 1986). IDRA has continued to conduct its own attrition analyses since then to monitor the status of school dropouts in the state. Our latest analyses for the 1995-96 school year show that the percent of students lost from public school enrollment increased from 33 percent in 1985-86 to 42 percent in 1995-96. Nearly 135,000 students were lost from enrollment prior to graduation in the 1995-96 school year.

Over the last decade, the attrition rate in Texas has increased by 27 percent.

Major Findings of the Attrition Analyses

IDRA's attrition study involved the analysis of enrollment figures for public high school students in the ninth grade during the 1992-93 school year and in the 12th grade in 1995-96. This period represents the time span that a ninth grade student in 1992-93 would be enrolled in school prior to graduation.

During the 1992-93 school year, there were 293,807 students enrolled in the ninth grade in Texas. Of this number, 0.2 percent were Native American, 2.1 percent were Asian Pacific Islander, 15.0 percent were Black or African American, 36.4 percent were Hispanic, 46.2 percent were White.

The total high school enrollment (grades nine through 12) was 906,288. Of these students, 0.2 percent were Native American, 2.5 percent were Asian Pacific Islander, 13.7 percent were African American, 32.9 percent were Hispanic, and 50.6 percent were White.

Three years later, during the 1995-96 school year, enrollment at the 12th grade level consisted of 186,013 students. Of this number, 0.2 percent were Native American, 3.1 percent were Asian Pacific Islander, 13.1 percent were African American, 30.1 percent were Hispanic, and 53.5 percent were White.

High school enrollment (grades nine through 12) consisted of 989,610 students. Of these students, 0.2 percent were Native American, 2.6 percent were Asian Pacific Islander, 14.1 percent were African American, 33.7 percent were Hispanic, and 49.4 percent were White.

Statewide and county attrition rates are presented for the three major race-ethnicity groups on pages 5 and 6. Some of the major findings of the study are summarized below:

- **The rate of attrition has increased by 27 percent over the 11-year study period**. The rate of attrition increased from 33 percent in 1985-86 to 42 percent in 1995-96.
- **The number of students lost from public high school enrollment has increased from 1985-86 to 1995-96.** The number of students (in grades nine through 12) lost from enrollment increased from about 86,000 in 1985-86 to about 134,800 in 1995-96.
- **When adjusted for population size, ethnic minority group students were more likely to be lost from school enrollment than were White non-**

Up or Down - continued on page 7

Longitudinal Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools 1985-1986 to 1995-1996

Race-Ethnicity Group	1985-1986	1986-1987	1987-1988	1988-1989	1989-1990	1991-1992	1992-1993	1994-1995	1995-1996	Percent Change From 1985-86 To 1995-96
Asian Pacific Islander	33	30	28	23	22	21	21	18	18	-45
Black	34	38	39	37	38	39	43	50	51	+50
Hispanic	45	46	49	48	48	48	49	51	53	+18
Native American	45	39	37	47	39	40	39	42	44	-2
White	27	26	24	20	19	22	25	30	31	+15
Total	33	34	33	31	31	34	36	40	42	+27

Figures calculated by IDRA from the Texas Education Agency *Fall Membership Surveys* data

Attrition Rates in Texas Public Schools: By Race-Ethnicity, 1995-96

County Name	Attrition Rates[1] Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Anderson	52	35	72	41
Andrews	**	32	38	33
Angelina	29	28	35	29
Aransas	57	42	44	42
Archer	100	21	84	24
Armstrong		27		25
Atascosa	67	30	45	43
Austin	47	27	63	35
Bailey	60	37	55	48
Bandera	100	32	74	41
Bastrop	54	36	55	43
Baylor	45	28	78	36
Bee	25	30	44	39
Bell	39	30	50	35
Bexar	48	28	52	44
Blanco		24	13	21
Borden		25	36	29
Bosque	73	28	64	35
Bowie	37	29	68	32
Brazoria	51	43	56	47
Brazos	51	29	57	39
Brewster		31	18	23
Briscoe		19	16	20
Brooks		4	32	30
Brown	41	30	51	34
Burleson	24	9	40	19
Burnet	64	42	66	47
Caldwell	38	41	51	45
Calhoun	70	36	63	50
Callahan		32	37	32
Cameron	85	37	49	49
Camp	26	37	56	36
Carson		14	42	16
Cass	32	33	43	33
Castro	57	6	42	31
Chambers	38	39	39	39
Cherokee	31	34	73	38
Childress	33	19	47	26
Clay		23	29	23
Cochran	23	33	74	56
Coke		34	78	59
Coleman	**	22	26	21
Collin	39	25	51	28
Collingsworth	37	22	50	29
Colorado	38	22	39	29
Comal	60	22	53	32
Comanche		18	38	24
Concho		3	27	18
Cooke	11	29	56	30
Coryell	47	28	46	32
Cottle		22	25	26
Crane	24	28	28	29
Crockett		26	29	24
Crosby	56	32	34	29
Culberson	**	14	29	23
Dallam	44	17	45	25
Dallas	56	31	65	47
Dawson	45	4	33	22
Deaf Smith	48	12	45	34
Delta	**	23	0	14

County Name	Attrition Rates[1] Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Denton	44	34	54	36
Dewitt	35	21	43	29
Dickens		26	63	37
Dimmit	100	15	42	40
Donley	49	17	36	23
Duval		19	28	28
Eastland	17	19	49	24
Ector	40	36	57	46
Edwards		36	26	32
Ellis	37	34	59	39
El Paso	53	27	45	43
Erath	40	26	51	29
Falls	41	31	57	39
Fannin	45	25	51	27
Fayette	37	30	42	32
Fisher	**	*	23	4
Floyd	**	14	36	28
Foard	20	*	78	21
Fort Bend	55	32	58	44
Franklin	77	41	66	46
Freestone	27	26	50	27
Frio	100	16	42	37
Gaines	69	19	50	38
Galveston	56	34	58	42
Garza	19	14	40	26
Gillespie		17	45	24
Glasscock		21	51	32
Goliad	**	37	48	37
Gonzales	53	30	47	40
Gray	28	29	48	32
Grayson	45	32	56	34
Gregg	45	28	65	35
Grimes	59	42	62	51
Guadalupe	23	26	60	40
Hale	23	22	49	37
Hall	54	14	51	36
Hamilton		33	22	32
Hansford		18	42	24
Hardeman	**	27	42	28
Hardin	52	36	37	38
Harris	55	34	60	48
Harrison	51	37	69	43
Hartley		**	60	4
Haskell	**	31	26	29
Hays	60	38	58	48
Hemphill		14	75	35
Henderson	43	25	56	29
Hidalgo	82	24	54	53
Hill	44	29	39	31
Hockley	30	14	45	28
Hood	100	36	53	37
Hopkins	43	24	67	29
Houston	46	29	27	35
Howard	39	31	40	35
Hudspeth		8	41	35
Hunt	41	38	64	40
Hutchinson	3	25	49	26
Irion		23	15	21
Jack		18	52	20
Jackson	34	34	60	41

[1] Calculated by: (1) dividing the high school enrollment in the end year by the high school enrollment in the base year; (2) multiplying the results from Calculation 1 by the ninth grade enrollment in the base year; (3) subtracting the results from Calculation 2 from the 12th grade enrollment in the end year; and (4) dividing the results of Calculation 3 by the result of Calculation 2. The attrition rate results (percentages) were rounded to the nearest whole number.

** = Attrition rate is less than zero (0).

. = The necessary data are unavailable to calculate the attrition rate.

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Attrition Rates in Texas Public Schools:
By Race-Ethnicity, 1995-96 (continued)

County Name	Attrition Rates[1]			
	Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Jasper	26	33	42	31
Jeff Davis	100	41	32	49
Jefferson	52	30	57	42
Jim Hogg		0	32	30
Jim Wells	100	25	32	31
Johnson	62	41	63	44
Jones	29	24	35	26
Karnes	71	35	38	38
Kaufman	42	44	66	45
Kendall	81	34	45	37
Kent		••	9	5
Kerr	34	32	47	36
Kimble		31	27	28
King		••	100	12
Kinney	100	9	28	23
Kleberg	62	20	46	39
Knox	16	••	33	9
Lamar	18	24	31	24
Lamb	40	25	39	33
Lampasas	79	39	62	44
La Salle		••	39	35
Lavaca	47	14	33	18
Lee	41	30	69	39
Leon	39	21	57	27
Liberty	35	42	69	43
Limestone	27	20	56	26
Lipscomb		11	51	22
Live Oak		24	47	35
Llano	100	26	40	28
Lubbock	28	22	40	28
Lynn	••	14	33	25
Madison	34	37	79	40
Marion	29	41		34
Martin	38	26	34	28
Mason		11	24	14
Matagorda	46	34	54	42
Maverick		3	39	38
McCulloch	10	15	30	22
McLennan	52	31	64	43
McMullen		37	26	34
Medina	62	33	49	42
Menard		12	30	14
Midland	46	26	48	35
Milam	42	22	52	33
Mills		20	••	17
Mitchell	••	20	40	23
Montague		28	37	28
Montgomery	42	33	50	35
Moore	••	16	40	27
Morris	38	39	69	40
Motley	38	18	47	23
Nacogdoches	57	26	70	38
Navarro	34	27	52	30
Newton	23	39	79	35
Nolan	19	36	46	39
Nueces	51	34	52	46
Ochiltree		31	54	37
Oldham		11	48	17
Orange	53	34	16	36
Palo Pinto	40	36	54	39
Panola	46	26	76	32
Parker	61	40	60	41
Parmer		6	46	29
Pecos	100	24	46	40
Polk	47	40	56	42
Potter	57	33	61	42
Presidio		55	40	41

County Name	Attrition Rates[1]			
	Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Rains	••	41	54	36
Randall	78	33	53	35
Reagan	42	18	33	28
Real		51	32	53
Red River	35	25	15	27
Reeves	100	29	49	47
Refugio	••	18	29	21
Roberts		10	100	13
Robertson	50	21	58	40
Rockwall	43	44	68	46
Runnels	75	21	43	29
Rusk	34	30	54	32
Sabine	27	28	0	29
San Augustine	20	27	0	24
San Jacinto	23	43	71	39
San Patricio	28	31	47	41
San Saba	0	48	34	45
Schleicher	0	19	28	22
Scurry	46	25	51	34
Shackelford		10	54	17
Shelby	41	34	60	36
Sherman		••	31	2
Smith	45	29	64	36
Somervell		30	24	29
Starr		58	54	54
Stephens	79	33	67	40
Sterling		6	••	3
Stonewall	100	27	66	38
Sutton		7	24	14
Swisher	10	13	41	25
Tarrant	53	33	57	40
Taylor	51	32	54	38
Terrell		••	17	••
Terry	68	10	59	41
Throckmorton		••	45	••
Titus	37	23	77	37
Tom Green	42	27	41	32
Travis	60	35	66	50
Trinity	57	38	40	42
Tyler	21	29		28
Upshur	24	40	76	39
Upton	0	27	20	24
Uvalde		31	40	37
Val Verde	54	31	43	42
Van Zandt	••	30	41	29
Victoria	47	32	55	45
Walker	38	26	32	31
Waller	51	41	61	48
Ward	91	21	23	26
Washington	29	15	35	20
Webb	••	27	45	44
Wharton	39	19	48	33
Wheeler	11	••	46	4
Wichita	29	27	37	28
Wilbarger	25	23	43	27
Willacy	38	31	47	46
Williamson	41	29	51	33
Wilson	80	27	41	33
Winkler	20	35	31	34
Wise	61	32	39	34
Wood	27	29	44	29
Yoakum		26	29	28
Young	29	32	55	34
Zapata		26	25	25
Zavala		••	45	44
State Total	51	31	53	42

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Up or Down - continued from page 4

Hispanic students. Hispanic and African American students were 1.7 times more likely to be lost from enrollment than were White students. Native American students were 1.4 times more likely to be lost from public school enrollment than were White students. Asian/Pacific Islander students were 1.7 times less likely to be lost from public school enrollment than were White students.

- **More males than females were lost from public school enrollment**. For the 1995-96 school year, the attrition rate for males was 45 percent as compared to 39 percent for females.

Conclusions

Just when many people are saying that things are looking up regarding dropout statistics, IDRA calls for the continuance of dropout prevention strategies, including the maintenance and analyses of dropout statistics.

Some now say that dropout statistics should be excluded as an indicator from the accountability standards. They believe somehow that the dropout dilemma has gone into remission and should be ignored as an indicator of school performance. Some suggest that the dropout indicator be dropped from the statewide accountability system and replaced by graduation rates.

Regardless of what types of data one uses, it is obvious that the collection and monitoring of dropout statistics must be continued, particularly in light of a recently released state audit that casts doubt on the accuracy and reliability of the Texas Education Agency's dropout data bases (see box below). It is premature to even suggest that the dropout problem has been remedied or is even close to being remedied. Continued focus on the development and implementation of successful dropout prevention initiatives is still an imperative for Texas and the rest of the nation.

For more information on current dropout definitions in Texas, how the dropout rate is calculated or IDRA's attrition model, see "IDRA's Latest Attrition Analyses Show Worsening Dropout Problems," by Roy Johnson, M.S., in the IDRA Newsletter, *October 1995.*

Resources

Cardenas, J.A., M. Robledo Montecel and J. Supik. *Texas School Dropout Survey Project: A Summary of Findings* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986).

Texas Education Agency (TEA). *1994-95 Report on Public School Dropouts* (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, August 1996).

Roy Johnson, M.S., is a senior research associate in the IDRA Division of Research and Evaluation.

Upcoming Events

TABE Conference '96

Sponsored by
Texas Association for Bilingual Education
(TABE)

November 13-16, 1996
Ft. Worth, Texas

For more information, call TABE toll-free at 1-888-255-4875.

Working Together: All Children, High Standards

U.S. Department of Education's 1996 Regional Conferences on Improving America's Schools.
Last of three conferences held this fall.

November 20-22, 1996
Atlanta, Georgia
For selected states

For more information, call 1-800-522-0772, extension 2248.

Audit Reports TEA Drop Out Measure is Inaccurate

A performance audit of the Texas Education Agency has found that the agency's dropout measures are inaccurate. The audit was performed by the Office of the State Auditor. The July 1996 report, *An Audit Report on Performance Measures at 20 State Agencies and One Educational Institution*, states that dropout data reported by the school districts in Texas were incorrect and that "the agency does not have adequate controls to prevent or detect school district errors." Auditors also reported follow-up results of previous audits and stated that TEA's methodology for collecting the dropout data is in compliance with the measure definition agreed upon with the Legislative Budget Board. A February 1995 audit report had stated that the system used to report the dropout measure did not conform to the correct definition.

The purpose of the audit was to determine whether or not selected state entities are accurately reporting their key performance measures to the Automated Budget and Evaluation System of Texas (ABEST) II data base. Auditors also determined whether or not the state entities have adequate control systems in place over the collection and reporting of their performance measures.

***Equity and Accountability** - continued from page 3*

them Hispanic, graduated from high school. When adults see that students who they thought would drop out of school are, when given the opportunity, inspirations and positive leaders to their peers, motivated learners to their teachers, sources of pride to their parents and contributors to their communities, a transformation occurs. They begin to see what is possible for *all* children. They begin to question their beliefs about students who may look different from them or speak another language. And ultimately, they change and make connections with other caring adults, and as a result schools change.

As we look at what we must do to change the path we have created for our children, we must have greater accountability, accessibility and alignment. We must accept that we are accountable for all of our children and youth, particularly those whose cries are not being heard. We must make our schools equitable and excellent and accessible to all of our children, and we must align resources with needs. We must also ensure that we ask the right questions when we research the dropout issue, focusing on what schools must do to tap the inherent strengths of their minority students and families and not on what their students and families lack and must do to "fit into" the schools.

In the final analysis, we, as adults and as Hispanics, must care about our children. We must not fail them.

Josie Danini Supik, M.A., is the director of the IDRA Division of Research and Evaluation.

REFLECTIONS

Liliana Cavazos (teenager) right, Guadalupe Cavazos (Liliana's mother) left and Clementina Padilla (Liliana's grandmother) seated

WHAT ADULTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TEENAGERS

Interviewer Aurelio Montemayor: Clementina Padilla, one of the prime movers in the emerging parent group, Families United for Education, suggested we could interview her granddaughter, Liliana Cavazos, for an opinion piece by an adolescent. I had not yet met the 14-year-old eighth grader face-to-face. We made a telephone appointment, and she agreed to be interviewed over the phone. I had no idea what responses I would get. I briefly talked to her mother who was happy that Liliana was going to be interviewed and also mentioned that she was going to attend an upcoming parent conference to hear her daughter speak on a bilingual teen panel. Liliana is articulate in both English and Spanish, and she asked me in what language I preferred to conduct the interview. I chose English because I sweat blood figuring out where the accents go. Below are her comments. The first question was: What is student leadership to you?

Answer: *"I don't think that there should be competition for leadership. It doesn't mean being popular but having qualities that your friends look up to...not so much looking up to you, but wanting your advice. It's really great when you can be there for someone when they really need you.*

"Some adults tell young people that they are not worth much because they are teens. There are many teenagers, most of my friends, who are doing good things. As in my science club, we're helping out the community. Adults should encourage teenagers in what they can do. They can help the community, and they need to be encouraged to do that, not just be there in class not contributing. But they need much encouragement.

"We're the future. If adults make a big mistake, it's going to affect us. We need all the encouragement we can get to make America and the world a better place."

Question: What support do teenagers need from their teachers?

Answer: *"There's nothing much really happening with the teachers, although we are experiencing some prejudice on my campus. Maybe it isn't prejudice, but I was supposed to get D Hall [detention] while another girl only got a warning. We don't know it for a fact, but some of us feel there is prejudice at school.*

"We need educational support. Sometimes they tell you, 'We'll help you with your math' or whatever, and you show up and there's other students there, and you don't get the attention you need. The teachers get on your case because you're not doing well and some jump on you for any little thing.

"The counseling programs are helping the kids out a lot because we have help for almost any problem. You can go talk to a counselor or a student about any problem that your have. I'm one of the youth counselors. They are helping because many parents are working and the students need the help."

Question: What support do teenagers need from school?

Answer: *"One thing that I like to talk about and debate about is how adults, not all adults, but some adults are overlooking teenagers. It makes some teens feel as if we are not really worth much. But, there some of us out there making a difference...some who were in gangs and are now cleaning up the graffiti. It's not fair to the teens that are doing something to be put under the category of worthless teenagers and to be overlooked."*

Question: What reasons do students give for dropping out of school?

Answer: *"When students drop out of school I guess it's because they just feel they can't make it any more. They are making really bad grades and they're probably thinking 'I'm good for nothing,' and they feel they won't succeed in life. This is not doing anything for me."*

Question: How do you feel about being bilingual?

Answer: *"I feel proud about being bilingual. I know that right now there's this whole issue about immigrants and that doesn't really bother me. I understand there are two sides to this issue. I understand that America is overcrowding. But also you must understand that immigrants aren't here to make trouble. They're hard workers...All they're trying to do is support their family."*

Question: What are some positive examples of support that you have received?

Answer: *"My mom's always there for me, whether I'm in a good or bad mood, she's there to help me out. She can always help me feel good. She helps me out with my homework. She's helped me out with my problems in having friends and peer pressure. She's talked to me about sex and the all the diseases so I know how to protect myself.*

"My teachers recognize me in the classroom and that feels really great. Although many students say I'm teacher's pet, I can always go to them for help. The women teachers especially, I can tell my problems to if I need to. I can give advice, but sometimes it's hard to solve my own problems."

What Adults Should Know *- continued on page 9*

What Adults Should Know *- continued from page 8*

Question: Your grandmother speaks and understands very little English. How do you feel about her and her contributions to others?

Answer: *"That's mostly where I get my influence...I want to be like her. I want to help out people because in our society there's a lot of trouble going on. My grandmother gives me a lot of advice. I give my friends the advice I get from my grandmother and from my mother. In my family we can always come to her for advice. She is my model."*

Liliana's mother, Guadalupe Cavazos, told me that Liliana is in the National Junior Honor Society, is in the student council and participated in the MedPrep program during the summer. Ms. Cavazos herself, an immigrant, is taking courses at a local community college, and her ultimate goal is to be a pharmacist.

Aurelio M. Montemayor is the lead trainer in IDRA's Division of Professional Development

Intercultural Development Research Association

The Fourth Annual

IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Educator's Institute™

Mark Your Calendars!

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The Week of the Young Child

Come and open new *windows* (Weaving Innovative Notions and Diverse Opportunities for Wee Scholars) at IDRA's fourth annual early childhood education training institute. Join early childhood education experts and colleagues as we open a wider window of opportunity for all young children. You will learn about...

- ✔ Restructuring for Success
- ✔ Multi-age Practices
- ✔ The Role of Play in Early Childhood
- ✔ Involving Parents

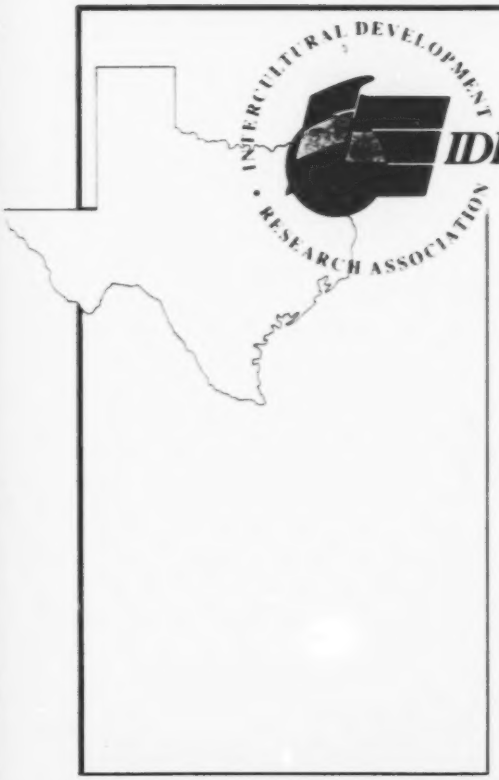
For more information contact Hilaria Bauer or Carol Chavez at IDRA, 210 684-8180.

Improving America's Schools Regional Conference Held

The first of three 1996 regional conferences on Improving America's Schools was held in St. Louis by the U.S. Department of Education. The *Working Together: All Children, High Standards* conference participants examined current themes in educational reform, and explored ways to bring people and resources together at every level.

The Intercultural Development Research Association participated through its Desegregation Assistance Center – South Central Collaborative. IDRA and its collaborative partners, Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin and RMC Research Corporation, participated through the STAR Center. The STAR Center is the comprehensive regional assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve Texas.

A key goal of the Department of Education was to inform participants about how its new system of technical assistance directly serves their state and region. The second regional conference is being held October 20-22 in San Francisco. The third will be November 20-22 in Atlanta. IDRA was selected by the Department of Education to conduct an evaluation of the conferences.



IDRA *Workshop On Workshops (WOW)*

This two-day experience spurs participants to become **more effective presenters**. The workshop uses an experience-based model that has practical application for you in your job. Current, research-based principles provide a context for participants to collaborate in creating informative, practical and engaging presentations. The *WOW* is **highly participatory** and directly addresses participants' needs and challenges. During the *WOW*, participants will:

- Experience a **complete process** for planning and conducting workshops.
- Review **principles of adult learning**.
- Contrast **needs assessment** approaches.
- Write and refine workshop **objectives**.
- Design innovative **activities**.
- Practice and **expand facilitation skills**.
- **Network** with other professionals.

The *WOW* is facilitated by Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., lead trainer in IDRA's Division of Professional Development and creator of the highly popular *WOW*. With more than 25 years of professional training experience, he can teach your staff or group the techniques every trainer needs to conduct meaningful workshops!

The cost is $150 per participant. This includes all training materials and personalized instruction, plus a copy of the *WOW Workbook* (a $25 value). Designed for people who are responsible for conducting training and workshops, the *WOW* is particularly useful for participants who bring workshop titles and materials that they want to work on.

To schedule a WOW *for your group, call Rogelio Lopez del Bosque or Aurelio Montemayor, 210 684-8180.*

"E Pluribus Unum" Strengthened by Multicultural Education

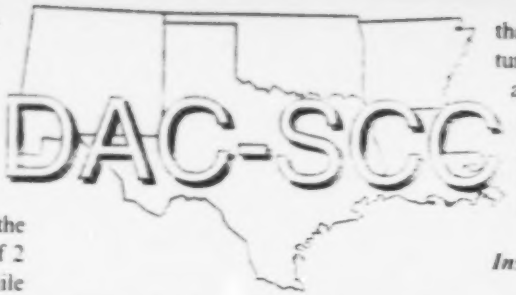
Frank Gonzales, Ph.D.

Ethnic pluralism is a reality. Populations of people of color – Hispanic, Asian, African American and Native American – are increasing in numbers more quickly than are people of European American ancestry who are frequently classified as White.

The 1990 census verified that the White population increased at a rate of 2 percent during the previous decade while African Americans had an increase of 13.2 percent; Hispanics, 53 percent; Asians, 107.8 percent; and Native Americans, 37.9 percent over the same time period (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990).

Schools have also experienced a "coloring" process. In Texas, 53 percent of the children in public schools are members of minority-majority populations (TEA, 1995).

By the year 2000, 54 major cities will have minority-majority populations (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991). By the year 2020, nearly half of school-age children in the United States will be people of color (Banks, 1991).



But even after 30 years of equal rights efforts under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, more minority students than White students drop out of school, score lower on tests and do not participate in the school process.

School reform must include the total environment that affects the diverse student population. This environment includes curricula, instructional resources, school policies, hiring practices and district climate.

Curriculum

In a multicultural learning environment, the curriculum should reflect all of its students and faculty. When particular groups feel excluded or victimized, conflicts, tensions and power struggles ensue. Even when the learning environment is not multicultural, it is important that the curriculum accurately describes the contributions of all groups of people. Such transformations in curriculum will better prepare all students for living and working in a multicultural world.

Instructional Resources

Students must have available resource materials that provide accurate information on the diverse aspects of the histories and cultures of various racial, ethnic and cultural groups. Learning centers and libraries should contain a variety of resources on the literature, music, folklore, history, life ways and arts of racial, ethnic and cultural groups.

School Policy

This diversity should also be reflected in assembly programs, cafeteria menus, extra-curricular activities and decor within hallways classrooms and offices. Instead of insisting on one set of behaviors that is unmeaningful or unfair to many students, school policies should recognize individual and ethnic group differences. For example, customs that affect Jewish students' school attendance on certain religious days or food preferences should be respected.

Hiring Practices

A school's staff should reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the school district. Teachers, administrators, cafeteria workers, custodians, secretaries and counselors can contribute to multicultural environments as significantly as can the curriculum or materials. Students learn important lessons about ethnic and cultural diversity by observing interactions among racial, ethnic, cultural and gender groups in the school. Often actions speak louder than words when districts do not make an effort to recruit members of racial and ethnic groups.

Multicultural education supports the notion of *e pluribus unum* – out of many, one. To build a successful and inclusive nation-state, the hopes, dreams and experiences of the many groups within it must be reflected in the structure of its education system. School reform must consider the

"E Pluribus Unum" - continued on page 16

United States Population

Ethnicity	Total Population	Percent of Population	Percent Change 1980-1990
American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut	1.9 million	0.8%	+37.9%
Asian or Pacific Islander	7.2 million	2.9%	+107.8%
Black	29.9 million	12.1%	+13.2%
Hispanic	22.3 million	9.0%	+53.0%
Other	9.8 million	3.9%	+45.1%
White	177.3 million	71.3%	+2.0%
United States	248.7 million	100.0%	+9.8%

Source: "Race and Hispanic Origin for the United States: 1990 and 1980," U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Expands

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is launching a national expansion into six new markets, bringing the total number of school sites served to 76, in 15 cities. The program expansion is supported by The Coca-Cola Foundation, which brings its total investment in the program to $2 million.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), is a nationally-recognized, cross-age tutoring program with an unusual twist. The program works by identifying junior high and high school students in at-risk situations and enlisting them as tutors for elementary school youngsters. The Valued Youth tutors learn self-discipline and develop self-esteem. They show increased academic performance, school attendance and advancement to higher education.

"Our thinking was that what students need most is a sense of accomplishment and a sense of contribution," said Dr. Maria Robledo Montecel, executive director of IDRA. "The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program offers that to young people, and these students thrive, academically and personally, when given the responsibility of tutoring the younger ones."

Over the last 12 years, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has maintained a less than 2 percent dropout rate for tutors, compared to a 14 percent yearly national dropout rate reported by a recent U.S. Census Bureau report on education.

Children from Kindred Elementary School in San Antonio talk with Dr. Maria Robledo Montecel, IDRA executive director, as they learn the alphabet. South San High School students in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program serve as tutors for kindergarten and first-grade children at Kindred.

Since 1990, more than 17,000 students, parents, teachers and administrators have participated in the program. Since its inception in 1984, the program has kept more than 3,000 students in school, young people who were previously at risk of dropping out.

The program began in San Antonio, Texas. It now spans the continent with program participants in California, New Mexico and across the state of Texas. The program is expanding to include schools in 16 cities – including Houston; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Birmingham, England.

Rita Rogers, a tutor at the newest Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program site in Houston, said the program has helped her make a positive change in school: "It has helped me a lot because in school I used to skip, but now I don't skip. I go to all of my classes. How am I going to tell the children to do their work if I don't do mine?"

In a four-year tracking study of one district in Texas where the program is in place, 100 percent of the Valued Youth tutors graduated from high school, and 58 percent went on to college or technical school – compared to 6 percent of the Texas national Hispanic student population who en-

VYP Expands - continued on page 16

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Receives *La Promesa* Award

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has been selected as a *La Promesa* program by the National Latino Children's Agenda. The *La Promesa de un Futuro Brillante* award was presented to the Intercultural Development Research Association during the National Summit on Latino Children held in San Antonio last month. The 63 La Promesa programs represent 14 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. Selection criteria included:

- address a need in the Latino community;
- approach service in unique and resourceful ways;
- foster a spirit of collaboration in the community;
- use language and culture as an asset to improve the life for Latino children;
- maintain a high percentage of bilingual/bicultural staff to the population served;
- provide opportunities for Latino leadership in the organization, either on the board of directors or community advisory boards; and
- pursue a mix of funding sources.

The National Summit on Latino Children brought together community leaders, Latino children, policy makers, corporate executives and foundation officers to share information and build a network of support for Latino children.

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"Our Nation on the Fault Line: Hispanic American Education Dropouts"

President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans

Editor's Note: The following excerpt is reprinted from Our Nation on the Fault Line: Hispanic American Education, *a report just released by the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. The commission is chaired by Ana "Cha" Margarita Guzmán of Austin Community College in Cedar Park, Texas.*

Call to Action

The commission calls upon the nation to improve education for Hispanic Americans. This call to action goes out to Hispanics and non-Hispanics alike – rich, middle-class and poor – to work in partnership with the leadership and resources of government and the private sector.

The nature of the problem with the education of Hispanic Americans is rooted in a refusal to accept, to recognize and to value the central role of Hispanics in the past, present and future of this nation. The education of Hispanic Americans is characterized by a history of neglect, oppression and periods of wanton denial of opportunity.

The successful resolution of what has become nothing less than a crisis is embedded in the collective and collaborative response of the nation; and it must be characterized by the affirmation of the value and dignity of Hispanic communities, families and individuals...

State of Education for Hispanic Americans

The "State of Education for Hispanic Americans" chapter of *Our Nation on the Fault Line* presents an overview of Hispanic American students as they move through the U.S. educational system – in elementary, middle, secondary, higher education and beyond. [The report also] examines some of the most serious inadequacies of the educational system for Latino students, including inequity in school financing, the lack of sufficient bilingual and English as a second language programs and teachers, and the misuse of assessment and testing. If Latino youth are to benefit fully from and contribute to the wealth of this nation, then greater numbers must be given the chance to succeed throughout the educational system.

Data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau of the Census show important educational gains over the past two decades for both Latinos and non-Hispanic Whites. Nevertheless, data also show Hispanic students trailing behind their non-Hispanic White peers in a number of important areas –disparities that begin even before kindergarten and continue throughout adulthood...

Dropping Out

Once a student falls behind, the effects may last a lifetime. Rather than face continuous humiliation, many Latino students simply walk away from formal education. It is essential to understand that each step in the educational system is a building block. When steps are missed, the results often lead to poor performance, grade retention and dropping out. Large gaps in educational attainment remain through the age of 17, with Latino students scoring lower than White students in math, science, reading and writing proficiency.

In short, due to many deficiencies in the educational system, Latinos have a high dropout rate (see note below). In October of 1993, the dropout rate for Hispanic 16- to 24-year-olds was 28 percent. That is, 28 percent of all Latinos in this age group had not completed and were not enrolled in high school, which was double the rate for Blacks (14 percent) and more than three times the rate for Whites (8 percent) in the same group.

> ***"The failure to face up to the need for change represents a myopia in America...Clearly, we have failed to recognize the crucially important role that those segments of our society who are out of the mainstream will have to play, if America is to compete successfully in the world economy."***
>
> – *Dr. Tomás Arciniega, President California State University, Bakersfield, California. Los Angeles Public Hearings, August 1995,* Our Nation on the Fault Line, *1996*

> ***In 1994, of the 43,261 Ph.D.s awarded nationwide, only 946 went to Hispanic Americans.***
>
> – Our Nation on the Fault Line, *1996*

Hispanic Americans not only have a higher dropout rate, they tend to drop out of school earlier. In 1993, an alarming 40 percent of Hispanic dropouts had not completed the eighth grade. Another 18 percent of Latino dropouts completed ninth grade,but left before completing 10th grade, and over one-half (58 percent) of Hispanic dropouts had less than a 10th grade education. Only 29 percent of White dropouts and 25 percent of Black dropouts leave as early as do Hispanics.

Hispanic American students' high dropout rates are linked to various inefficiencies and inadequacies throughout the educational system. Intervention measures, therefore, must be aimed as well at the elementary level and secondary level since a very large percent drop out early. Simply put, there is a need for more programs designed to bring the performance of Latino students up to par with other groups.

Grade retention is one of the major factors contributing to school dropout rates. Indeed, when looking at the overall picture, a correlation between dropout and retention rates becomes apparent. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics dem-

Note: Status rates measure that part of the total population that has not completed high school and is not enrolled at one point in time regardless of when dropping out occurs. Status dropout rates thus reveal the extent of the dropout problem in the population and suggest the magnitude of the total challenge for further training and education that will permit individuals to participate more fully in the economy and the life of the nation.

Our Nation *- continued on page 13*

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Our Nation - continued from page 12

onstrate that most students who decide to drop out have repeated one or more grades. In 1993 alone, 41 percent had repeated more than one grade, 17 percent had repeated on grade, and 9 percent had not repeated a grade.

Hispanic students are more often than not "tracked" into general courses that satisfy only the basic high school requirements, and do not provide access to four-year colleges or to rigorous technical schools. In addition, such courses do not qualify Hispanics for good, entry level jobs in high-technology industries. However, while the dropout rates remain high, some progress can be noted. The percentage of Latino and White high school graduates taking advanced science and mathematics courses, for instance, increased dramatically between 1982 and 1992. As a result, a few more Hispanic students are now following a more rigorous curriculum, but they are far from the majority.

Even as the numbers of Latino high school graduates increase, they are still less likely than White graduates to have completed the "New Standards" curriculum, which includes four years of English and three years of science, social studies and mathematics (44 percent compared to 54 percent in 1994). In 1992, Hispanic graduates were less likely than White graduates to have taken geometry, algebra II, trigonometry, chemistry, physics or a combination of biology, chemistry and physics; they were more likely to have taken remedial mathematics...

Conclusion

...There are serious shortcomings in the public education system that directly lead to unacceptable dropout rates, exceedingly low numbers of college graduates and an overall denial of educational excellence to Hispanic Americans. While certain academic gains can be measured with some groups of Hispanic students, there remain enormous gaps between Hispanic American students and other American students on specific measures of educational attainment.

Unequal educational outcomes diminish the nation's ability to compete in the global economy, thus weakening its national fabric by not utilizing all of its human capital. The nation essentially is being robbed of the full intellectual, moral and spiritual strengths of a major segment of the American population, Hispanic Americans...

Since 1983, the educational war conducted against children in public schools is slowly being won for many students, but not for all. To win that war, this work requires commitment, as a nation, to provide the best education possible to all U.S. citizens. The President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans is aggressively and affirmatively committed to keeping the nation alert. The United States should not tolerate the loss to our society of any more generations of children of any cultural, racial or linguistic background. Excellence and equity must be inseparable benchmarks for the education of all our nation's children. This report, therefore, is not the last word on what concerns Hispanic Americans. On the contrary, this report is just the beginning.

For a copy of the report, contact the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, directed by Alfred Ramirez, at 600 Independence Avenue S.W. Washington, D.C. 20202-3601; 202/401-1411. E-mail: WHITE_HOUSE_INIT_HISPANIC_ED@ed.gov. Reprinted here with permission.

***School Finance Inequities** - continued from page 1*

of school funding to be in violation of the state constitution (IDRA, 1995).

This is a problem of national proportions that dates back to the *Rodriguez vs. San Antonio Independent School District* case filed in 1968. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it is the responsibility of the states to deal with funding equity issues. Thereafter, the battle for fair and equitable schools shifted to the state level, starting with the *Serrano vs. Priest* case in California and the *Robinson vs. Cahill* case in New Jersey in the 1970s. It continued with *Edgewood vs. Meno* and other cases in the 1990s (Cárdenas, 1995).

The majority decision in the *Edgewood vs. Meno* case was significant because it mandated that education be identified as a fundamental right, and it required the state to achieve a greater level of equalization than had previously been available. This would be accomplished by narrowing the tax base differences between property rich and property poor schools and by requiring the state to equalize any remaining differences in revenue raising capability.

The problem with the 1995 Texas Supreme Court's conclusion rests with the decision that allows a disparity of $600 per pupil and allows the state to side-step the issue of equalized funding for facilities.

CHILDREN...
ARE READY TO LEARN,
...THE SCHOOLS
ARE NOT READY FOR THEM.

For more than two decades, poor school districts and advocacy groups struggled with the state of Texas for equal educational opportunities, especially in terms of school finance. Yet, after the district court ruled in favor of increasing the quality of the state's public schools, we were pushed many steps backward by the Texas Supreme Court.

The court concluded that the extent of the state's responsibility is to ensure that there is a "general diffusion of knowledge" that does nothing substantial to address the unequalized enrichment of school districts so long as "efficiency" is maintained (Cortez, 1995). The court then mandated that the state legislature devise an answer to the state's educational woes; and it did. To our dismay, the resulting legislation complied with the court order even though it did little to improve low wealth schools.

Provisions for facilities funding are scant. This has created a situation where schools with few resources are forced to choose between improving the physical conditions of school facilities or being able to provide program enrichment. The forced exclusion of one or the other is detrimental. Children deserve better than a "minimal" and inferior education.

School Facilities in the United States

The need for improved school facilities is not unique to Texas. Providing children with facilities that are conducive to learning is an important part of their intellectual development, whether that be in the primary or secondary levels. Only weeks ago, stories of overcrowding in the nation's more populated areas have surfaced in the media. The September 6 issue of *The New York Times* reported that during the opening days of this 1996-97 school year, schools in New York found themselves overwhelmed with an unanticipated swell in their student population (Steinberg, 1996). Schools that were renovated and buildings that were being

***School Finance Inequities** - continued on page 14*

Endorsers of IDRA's "Children First" Declaration

Organizations and individuals who endorsed the "Children First" declaration agreeing that children are first in our consideration of equalizing our schools include:

Alamo Reading Council
American Civil Liberties Union – San Antonio Chapter
Asociacion Latino Americana de Salud [Mental] (ALAS)
AVANCE
Broaddus Independent School District
Canutillo Independent School District
Carver Community Cultural Center
Corporate Fund for Children
Dickinson Independent School District
Equity Center
Fabens Independent School District
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)
Kenedy Independent School District
Latin American Research and Service Agency
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law of Texas – Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project
League of United Latin America Citizens (LULAC)
Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF)
NAACP – San Antonio Branch
National Council of La Raza
National Latino Children's Agenda
San Antonio Area Association for Bilingual Education
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP)
Texas Association for Bilingual Education
Texas Federation of Teachers

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converted to accommodate the growing student population in that city were not ready on the first days of school, causing hundreds of children to be turned away from the schoolhouse doors.

Similarly, across the Western states, communities of all kinds are being faced with tremendous growth in the number of children, partly as a result of the baby boomers delaying their childbearing years and, to a smaller extent, because of a population influx from other countries.

In a report issued by the U.S. Department of Education, *A Special Back-to-School Report: The Baby Boom Echo*, it is estimated that 51.7 million children are attending school this fall. Yet, somehow, cities like New York City did not anticipate the increased student population (1996). Even a minimally competent demographer would have been able to predict such dramatic changes in the general population.

It is inexcusable that children should suffer being piled into classrooms and gyms because the schools are not ready for them. School personnel must have the foresight to be equipped to handle the numbers of students in our nation's public schools. But, in addition to building new schools to accommodate greater numbers of pupils, particular attention needs to be given to *facilities funding* in order to upgrade those older school buildings throughout the United States that have suffered neglect and to make way for incorporating technology and other innovations within the classroom learning environment.

A U.S. General Accounting Office survey in June of this year exposed some troubling statistics regarding the level of attention that is being given to school facilities (1996a). According to the survey, approximately 60 percent of the 80,000 elementary and secondary schools in this country are at some level of disrepair. Almost every state reported that about half of their schools are an "inadequate environment for learning." Many schools are specifically lacking proper lighting, plumbing or ventilation.

Another example of the need for improved facilities to meet increased enrollment is cited in the *Special Back-to-School Report* from the Department of Education. In a suburban area of Atlanta, the classrooms are so overcrowded that the district estimates it will have to build three classrooms every week for the next four years

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just to accommodate the influx of pupils.

Also, in our nation's capital city, 60 percent of schools reported needing new roofs, while 72 percent reported needing new walls (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

The continued decline of classroom and building conditions and the need for increased construction are expected to continue to burden school districts into the next century. In fact, according to the Department of Education report, this trend of a growing school-age population has gradually increased, and there is no evidence of a decline in the near future.

As we look at the new construction activities occurring nationally, it will be important for us to be vigilant in tracking the concentrations of minority pupils to avoid resegregation and to ensure that all students benefit from local school construction and renovation efforts. States across the country will have to meet the challenge of providing adequate learning environments that can meet the educational needs of today and the economic demands of the future.

School Facilities in Texas

Based on a national survey of school officials, the General Accounting Office estimates that $112 billion is needed to repair of upgrade the country's school facilities to good overall condition (1996a). Those most in need are the low wealth districts and districts with high concentrations of Latino students. Texas is one of the few states that does not provide support for school facilities.

The General Accounting Office report, *School Facilities: Profiles of School Condition by State*, indicates that in 1993, 76 percent of Texas schools reported needing to upgrade buildings on-site to "good overall condition" (1996b). Even federal requirements are not being adequately financed. For example, over half of the schools in the state reported that their expenditures for disposal of asbestos were below average; some had spent no money on this. Fifty-two percent noted below average spending for accessibility for disabled students, while 14 percent reported having spent no money to meet the federal requirement.

Let us not be lulled into an argument of merely bricks and mortar. We are talking about the molding of the future of massive populations of children who are ready to learn, but because of bureaucracy and politics, the schools are not ready for them.

To give you an example, in 1994, schools like South San Antonio Junior High School did not provide adequate bathroom facilities for students, and leaky ceilings plagued Southside Junior High School in San Antonio. In stark contrast, South Grand Prairie High School in Grand Prairie, Texas has a planetarium in its school to instruct its students in the area of science (IDRA, 1994). While some districts have the resources to provide state-of-the art computers, other districts face the challenge of educating students with grossly outdated textbooks.

School buildings are where children live, and children should attend schools where they feel safe, where they feel proud and motivated to learn, where they feel good about their community and about themselves. Despite court battles to expand the educational opportunities of all children, we have not yet reached the stage where we can honestly and proudly claim that all children are receiving a quality education. Every child has a right to an education that will prepare him or her to be a skilled and productive member of our society.

Recommendations – IDRA's Position

All states should provide direct funding for school buildings. IDRA has long held that any proposal dealing with facilities must include four factors:

- Equalize the differing property tax bases of school districts.
- Take into account a district's existing facilities-related debt.
- Take into account the age and condition of local facilities.
- Recognize rapid growth in student enrollment in local districts.

While states have a principal role in dealing with the facilities issue, the federal government can spurn or support facilities development. IDRA's policy recommendations are:

- The need for federal support for facilities is a crucial need for adequate education.
- There is a need for federal funding of school facilities. The high cost of construction and bonded indebtedness makes it difficult for the states to provide the necessary funds.
- Federal funding should not be used as a substitute for state equalization. Federal funding should promote equalization by providing an incentive for states to improve state funding equity in order to qualify for and receive federal matching funds and ensure that areas with the greatest need are targeted.
- There should be an ongoing federal evaluation of equity in state funding.
- There should be continued study on facilities needs and the impact of facilities on instructional programs.
- There is a need for continuance monitoring of state equalization efforts.
- There should be federal financial support to assist states in funding local school facilities.

In conclusion, commissioners, I would like to impress upon you that children are ready to learn. We need to make sure that our schools are ready to receive them and educate them well. As Department of Education Secretary William Riley stated in the *Special Back-to-School Report*:

> With so many young people coming of age and needing a quality education to prepare for the future, America will surely be tested on whether we will invest in time, energy and resources so that these children and this nation can look to the future with confidence.

COMING UP!

In November-December, the *IDRA Newsletter* focuses on public engagement.

Resources

Cardenas, José A. *Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy.* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Simon and Schuster, 1995)

Cortez, Albert. "The Texas Supreme Court's Decision In *Edgewood IV*: Findings, Implications, and Next Steps." *IDRA Special Bulletin* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, March 1995).

General Accounting Office. *Report to Congressional Requesters, School Facilities: America's Schools Report Differing Conditions.* (Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office, June 1996).

General Accounting Office. *Report to Congressional Requesters, School Facilities: Profiles of School Condition by State* (Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office, June 1996).

Intercultural Development Research Association. *IDRA Special Bulletin* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, March 1995) pg. 1.

Intercultural Development Research Association. "School Facilities Disparities Across Texas," photographs, *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, May 1994).

Steinberg, Jacques. "School Overcrowding to Last,

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tered higher education during that time.

"When you ask a student what does Valued Youth do for you...it has to do with the sense of respect in terms of the student going to a classroom and tutoring three students," commented Bertha Peña, a principal in Brownsville, Texas. "It gives them a sense of respect: 'I'm somebody. Somebody looks up to me. Somebody requires something of me, and so I'm responsible for them, and they respect me.'"

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program recently received national recognition in December 1995 as a "program that works" as part of a NBC special called, *Everybody's Business: America's Children*, hosted by the *Today Show's* Katie Couric. In recent months, it has also been featured nationally in *Hope Magazine*, *USA Today*, *Education Daily* and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

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New York City Officials Say." *The New York Times* (September 6, 1996), CXLV (50, 542).

U.S. Department of Education. *A Back-to-School Special Report: The Baby Boom Echo* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, August 21, 1996).

Dr. Maria Robledo Montecel is the executive director of IDRA.

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diversity of the student population in order to create a system where all groups are included.

Resources

Banks, James A. *Curriculum Guidelines of Multicultural Education* (National Council for the Social Studies – Task Force, 1991).

Texas Education Agency (TEA). *Snapshot '95* (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, 1995).

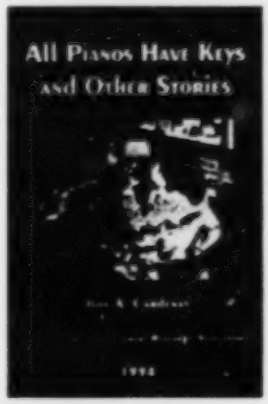
U.S. Bureau of the Census (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990).

U.S. Bureau of the Census (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991).

Frank Gonzales, Ph.D., is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development.

All Pianos Have Keys and Other Stories

by Dr. José A. Cárdenas



In a way, this small, 134-page book complements Dr. José Cárdenas' larger *Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy* just published by Simon and Schuster. The multicultural education book is an anthology of 92 professional articles resulting from his 45 years as a professional educator. *All Pianos Have Keys* represents the lighter side of these 45 years.

"The seriousness of my professional life has been paralleled by extensive humor in my personal life. I enjoy a funny story and a good joke," writes Cárdenas in the Preface.

The first eight articles deal with the lighter side of his life. They include personal anecdotes from childhood to adulthood. The second section consists of 12 anecdotes where humor and professional seriousness have intersected. The last section consists of nine articles on a variety of professional topics addressed in a lighter context than is possible in professional publications.

All Pianos Have Keys is distributed exclusively by the Intercultural Development Research Association ($12.70). Contact IDRA at 210/684-8180 or 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228; Fax 210/684-5389. It is IDRA policy that all orders totalling less than $30 be pre-paid.

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